

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on January 27 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on

January 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Revising Budget
Amendments for the Department of Veterans Affairs
January 28, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker:

My Administration is committed to ensuring that our Nation's veterans continue to receive timely and high-quality health care.

On July 14, 2005, I submitted an FY 2006 budget amendment to the Congress of \$1.977 billion to cover increased costs in the Department of Veterans Affairs medical care system. I did not designate the funds as an emergency requirement when I submitted the FY 2006 budget amendment. While I believe this funding should be categorized as part of the VA's base budget, it is critical that this funding be made available to meet veterans' needs. As a result, to provide the needed funds to veterans in a timely manner and consistent with the 2006 Military Quality of Life and

Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, Public Law 109-114, I hereby revise that request to designate \$1.225 billion of the amount proposed in that amendment as an emergency requirement. I appreciate your cooperation in working with me to ensure the highest quality of care for our veterans.

Additional information on this action is set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The details of the FY 2006 amendment were included in the previous transmittal.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
January 30, 2006

The President. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for being here. We just had a really good discussion about the year 2006. Tomorrow night I'm going to be speaking to the Congress, giving the country my State of the Union Address. I can't tell you how upbeat I am about our future, so long as we're willing to lead.

We talked about how to make sure that America continues to spread the peace and

to protect ourselves. I heard from the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of State about very positive initiatives, not only in the Middle East but in the Far East as well. We talked about how to make sure this economy of ours stays the strongest economy in the world and that we recognize we can't just sit back and hope for the best, that we've got to lead. And so we had a good discussion about matters

such as health care and energy and education, all of which I'll address tomorrow night.

I'm looking forward to speaking to the country. We've got a lot to be proud of. We've got a lot of work to do. One of the things I will do is call for Congress and the executive branch to have a good, honest dialog but to speak candidly with each other, but to do so in a way that brings credit to the process. And I'll do my best to elevate the tone here in Washington, DC, so we can work together to achieve big things for the American people.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Nedra Pickler [Associated Press].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The talks between Iran and the EU-3 appear to be making little progress. A senior British official there said that they detect nothing new in their approach. What can be done now?

The President. Well, obviously, one option is to—for the Perm 5 to work together to bring Iran to the U.N. Security Council. That's an option. And we're going to continue to work with our friends and allies to present a united front to the Iranians. And the message is, give up your nuclear weapons ambitions. And the good news is, most of the world recognizes that Iran, being the nontransparent society that it is, a Government that had violated IAEA rules, is one that cannot be trusted with technology that could enable it to develop a nuclear weapon. And so we're united in our goal to keep the Iranians from having a weapon, and we're working on the tactics necessary to continue putting a united front out.

The other thing is that we want the people of Iran to be able to live in a free

society. And so tomorrow night I am going to talk about this issue and make clear the policy of the United States.

Patsy [Patricia Wilson, Reuters].

Palestinian Elections/Hamas

Q. Mr. President, Israeli officials are seeking an international boycott of a Palestinian Government that includes Hamas. Do you support this? And if so, isn't that punishing the Palestinian people for exercising the democratic rights that you've called for in the region?

The President. The Hamas party has made it clear that they do not support the right of Israel to exist. And I have made it clear, so long as that's their policy, that we will not support a Palestinian Government made up of Hamas. We want to work with a government that is a partner in peace, not a government that is—whose declared intentions might be the destruction of Israel.

Secondly, this new democracy that's emerging in the Palestinian Territories must understand that you can't have a political party that also has got a armed wing to it; that democracies yield peace. And so the second half of our message to Hamas is, get rid of your arms; disavow terrorism; work to bring what you promised to the people of the Palestinian Territories. Listen, these folks ran on the campaign, "We're going to get rid of corruption," and that "We're going to provide services to the people," and that's positive. But what isn't positive is that they've got parts of their platform that will make it impossible for them to be a peaceful partner.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:06 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action To Vote on the Nomination of Samuel A. Alito, Jr., To Be an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court
January 30, 2006

I am pleased that a strong, bipartisan majority in the Senate decisively rejected attempts to obstruct and filibuster an up-or-down vote on Judge Sam Alito's nomination. The Senate has a constitutional responsibility to hold an up-or-down vote on every judicial nominee, and throughout its 216-year history, the Senate has held an up-or-down vote on every Supreme Court

nominee with majority Senate support. Judge Alito is extraordinarily well-qualified to serve on our Nation's highest Court, and America is fortunate that this good and humble man is willing to serve. I look forward to the Senate voting to confirm Sam Alito as the 110th Justice of the Supreme Court.

Statement on the Death of Coretta Scott King
January 31, 2006

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of Coretta Scott King. Mrs. King was a remarkable and courageous woman and a great civil rights leader. She carried on the legacy of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., including through her extraordinary work at the King Center. Mrs.

King's lasting contributions to freedom and equality have made America a better and more compassionate nation. Laura and I were fortunate to have known Mrs. King, and we will always treasure the time we spent with her. We send our condolences and prayers to the entire King family.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Samuel A. Alito, Jr., To Be an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court
January 31, 2006

I am pleased that the Senate has voted to confirm Judge Sam Alito as the 110th Justice of the Supreme Court. Sam Alito is a brilliant and fair-minded judge who strictly interprets the Constitution and laws and does not legislate from the bench. He is a man of deep character and integrity, and he will make all Americans proud as a Justice on our highest Court. The son of an Italian immigrant, Judge Alito's appointment to the Supreme Court is the realization of the American dream for this good man and his family. I congratulate

Judge Alito, his wife, Martha, the Alito children, and Judge Alito's mother, Rose, on this historic achievement and momentous day in the life of our country.

Judge Alito replaces Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Justice O'Connor was the first woman ever to sit on the Supreme Court, and she is one of the most admired Americans of our time or any time. Our Nation is grateful to Justice O'Connor for her extraordinary and dedicated public service, and Laura and I wish her and John all the best.